

**NEW YORK FOREIGN PRESS CENTER BRIEFING WITH ADMIRAL
ROBERT F. WILLARD, COMMANDER, U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND (PACOM),
CAMP H.M. SMITH, HAWAII**

**TOPIC: SECURITY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE
ASIA-PACIFIC**

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MODERATOR: Good morning, and thank you for joining us. Today, briefing is Admiral Robert Willard, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, Camp H.M. Smith, Hawaii. He will be briefing today on security challenges and opportunities in the Asia Pacific. Welcome, Admiral Willard.

ADMIRAL WILLARD: Thank you, Neda. It's a pleasure to be back at the Foreign Press Center, and I very much look forward to your questions. I would just like to start by making a few remarks regarding the Asia Pacific in general. And first, I know I speak for all Americans when we offer our sorrow and condolences to the people of Japan that have suffered so greatly as a consequence of the national disasters in Northern Honshu.

My wife and I had the opportunity to visit one of the tsunami-stricken areas just a few days after the event occurred, and I can assure you that it was stunning in terms of the devastation and damage to the area, and, in a way, inspiring to see the survivors and how well they were pulling together in order to attempt to rebuild their lives and communities. So it is truly a disaster of just unprecedented proportion, especially when you add the reactors accidents that were a consequence of the two natural disasters. So this is three disasters in one and something that no country should have to contend with. We've been pleased and certainly encouraged by our work in support of the Japanese defense forces, and we'll continue to support this particular disaster and Japan throughout this period until Northern Honshu is again resilient and rebuilt.

In the Asia Pacific, Pacific Command is interested in a great many challenges. At PACOM, I've been in command now for about 18 months, and the priorities that we've faced 18 months ago continue, I think, to be our main focus. And they include many, many challenge areas. North Korea is one that should come as no surprise to anyone. The challenges posed by the North Korean regime and the provocations that we experienced in 2010 continue to be an area that we focus on now in hopes of deterring a next provocation and influencing this regime to change its ways. And I know the international community is very much focused on North Korea and its nuclearization and the many issues that concern us.

One of the large areas that – large management areas that I'm responsible for is to improve U.S. relations with China, especially the military-to-military relations between the two countries. And that has been a challenge for us as a consequence of the

suspension of mil-to-mil relations last year. It's subsequently resumed, and we're hopeful that 2011 will be a much better year for these two very consequential militaries to come together.

We are focused on our partner, India. It's a longstanding relationship that requires a great deal of attention given India's prominence in South Asia and the many challenges that surround India. And we're currently working with India and the regional nations on containing the terrorist activity, particularly Lashkar-e Tayyiba and that particular terrorist organization, which, as you'll recall, attacked Mumbai and continues to pose a threat throughout South Asia.

We're also working very closely with our allies and partners in the region to strengthen those alliances. I think the very rapid teaming with the Japanese defense forces in conjunction with this particular disaster series was illustrative of the very close relationship that we have with our Japanese military counterparts and the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

Similarly, we've been working very closely with the Republic of Korea for 50 years in deterring the North Koreans and sustaining an armistice, but in the past 12 months in particular, given the dynamics in North Korea and the threat posed by the various provocations that we experienced last year. But our other allies in the region, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia, are all great partners, and the United States Pacific Command is focused on strengthening those partnerships where we can. And there are a number of strategic partners as well in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and the like that are also worthy of much of our management attention.

So PACOM is not lacking for business in the Asia Pacific. It's a vast and incredibly complex and dynamic area to work in and to attempt to manage from a military standpoint, and we enjoy it very much, appreciate the complexities of the region, and greatly appreciate our partnerships in the region that are enabling the security of an area that contains about \$5.3 trillion of commerce on the maritime domain each year, \$1.2 trillion of U.S. bilateral trade. So the security and stability of this region should be important to all of us, to the Asia Pacific nations, to the United States, and to the rest of the world. And I look forward to your questions.

MODERATOR: Okay. And for transcription purposes, if you could just state your name and news organization before your question.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Admiral. I'm Hideo Miyawaki from Kyodo News, Japan. And thank you very much for your words on Japan.

My question is: How has the recent natural disaster and the nuclear crisis in Japan impacted the U.S. servicemen and their families stationed in Japan? And do you think that there are chances of reviewing the U.S. troop deployment in Japan as a result of the crisis? Thank you.

ADM WILLARD: Thank you very much. Most of the U.S. service members in Japan have contributed to supporting the Japanese defense forces in response to the disaster. So approximately 18,000 U.S. service members very quickly came to the support of the Japanese defense forces in northern Honshu to assist in what was occurring. And we were very fortunate that we had the *Ronald Reagan* carrier strike group and two amphibious ready groups operating proximate to Japan that could close on the disaster area very rapidly.

But as you know, the Marines came up from Okinawa and assisted on the ground in conjunction with the Japanese taskforce in the Sendai area in conjunction with the disaster response. So for the service members there, this has mostly been about supporting our Japanese friends and responding to the disaster and the humanitarian crisis in the north, and we continue to do that today.

For the dependents in Japan, just like the people in great metropolitan Tokyo, I think there was a great uncertainty in the beginning regarding the scope of this particular disaster and uncertainty regarding just what the reactor's accidents dimension of this brought to the people of Japan. My wife and I, when we traveled to Japan, took the time to meet with our service families, the dependents and spouses, as well as the service members left on our bases, to try and explain the situation as we understood it and to assure them of both our commitment to Japan, encourage them to be part of that commitment and support to the Japanese people, and at the same time, to discuss with them, very frankly, the circumstances that they found themselves in. And I think they've served us very well. As you know, they continue to support the operations that we're conducting in northern Honshu to support the Japanese defense force.

QUESTION: Roger Batson with Nippon TV. I had a question regarding Operation Tomodachi. To assist in your efforts there you've been coordinating with getting information and coordinating information with the Japanese government. Do you think that's been sufficient thus far in them providing information necessary for you to conduct your mission?

ADM WILLARD: Yeah. Thank you. That's a very good question. First of all, we had three disasters in one. And as all governments experience when disasters of great magnitude take place, it's very challenging to organize around that disaster and exchange information to the extent that everyone is satisfied. And I think this particular operation was no exception. It was very challenging for the Japanese Government, for Tepco, the facility – the nuclear facility power company, and the overall organization of both civil support and military support to come together to have lines of communication that were satisfying everyone. And I think we've achieved that in one month, which I regard as remarkable.

So I watched the exchange of information, government to government, industry to industry, military to military, improve every day over the past four weeks. And right now I would offer that the information exchange is very good among all parties. We've begun to exchange like information with regard to the situation around Fukushima and

we have been exchanging, for some time, very, very openly, the information regarding humanitarian assistance, disaster response needs in the north.

MODERATOR: I have a question from Washington. Satoshi Ogawa from Yomiuri Shimbun says, "On March 17th, you claimed in a press conference that you gave a long list of offers of support to alleviate the nuclear disaster in Japan and that the Japanese Government was considering the options." He wants to know, have you heard back from the Japanese Government, and what is the current status of U.S. assistance to mitigate the situation with the plant?

ADM WILLARD: Well, first of all, we have actually shifted in the past several days much of our effort from humanitarian assistance disaster response, which is now being taken over by the civil municipal authorities in Japan, to the mitigation of the reactors accidents themselves. And so there has been a major focus on the part of the United States supporting forces to the Japanese defense force in terms of helping them deal with the Fukushima response.

As you suggest, we have provided a number of capabilities options for the Japanese defense forces to consider that the U.S. military could provide to help with the situation. Some of them have been expected, some of them have gone unneeded. Right now, there are capabilities, there are technologies being introduced from other countries as well as from U.S. industry that are filling those groups. So we're – we've provided the type of capabilities that we can. A good example of that is we recently introduced a 150-man Marine Corp team that specializes in operating in a radiological environment, and they're conducting both training along the Japanese defense forces and assistance to the Japanese defense forces in conjunction with the Fukushima response.

QUESTION: Chen Weihua from China Daily. Would you talk about what sort of cooperation exchange with Chinese military you are expecting this year. And also the – how much you talk about a number of challenges in the Asia Pacific. How much, I mean, the China factor, kind of like what percentage? Would China be concerned, say, if the U.S. is thinking about stepping up a presence in Australia militarily? Is that directed at China – actually it is --

ADM WILLARD: Well, first of all, I'm often asked what my biggest challenge is as the Pacific Command commander, and frequently I answer that it is the challenge of getting the relationship and the United States and the United States military and China right. So I would offer that, first and foremost, our intent with the Chinese is to join in partnership in a constructive way that contributes to the overall security and stability of the Asia Pacific region. That's the goal. That's the goal for the United States, it's the goal for the United States military in the Pacific.

We have renewed mil-to-mil relations. It actually began with a low-level round of talks at my headquarters, termed Military Maritime Consultative Agreement talks, which are discussions with our People's Liberation Army counterparts that deal with maritime safety and protocols both on the sea and in the air with regard to operating our forces in

close proximity to one another. And those we've had at some periodicity, but we had not had them for nearly a year, and so that was a welcome first step in renewing mil-to-mil engagement.

Secretary Gate's visit to Beijing was next. President Hu, of course, conducted a state visit to the United States. And in the news today is our discussions of General Chen's soon-to-be visit to Washington, D.C. as a counterpart visit to Secretary Bob Gates' visit to Beijing. And there have been overtures made on both sides regarding areas of common interest between the United States military and China's military, where we can find opportunities for both dialogue and exchange. And there have been proffers of more strategic-level discussions by Secretary Gates to his Chinese counterparts in the area of strategic nuclear space and cyberspace that the Chinese are considering. So I'm hopeful that this year will be a good year for U.S.-China relations and particularly for mil-to-mil relations, that it will be continuous, and that the dialogue will be elevated, and that we'll be able to find opportunities in all of the areas of convergence to join together.

QUESTION: Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Ken Obara from NHK. I would like to ask a question going back to the nuclear crisis in Japan. Regarding your, I would say, experience in nuclear power training, how would you assess the situation that is currently going on in Fukushima? And how has the Japanese, I would say, with the support of the United States, have tackled with the situation? How would you look at the current situation ongoing? And what kind of – what do you think that you, especially of Pacific Command, can help out in the further days of this nuclear crisis?

ADM WILLARD: Yeah, thank you. That – a good question. I think currently, the situation at Fukushima is improved and improving every day, though it's not without continued risk. And I think it's worth watching very closely as the days go on. We were encouraged that they've introduced a nitrogen induction into plant number one, and we're looking forward to the same in plants number two and number three to reduce the risk of hydrogen explosions, and to enable the possibility of flooding the containments if that's the choice in the future.

I think in general terms, the work between international industry, nuclear experts and oversight, and TEPCO has been strong and improving over time such that today, I think the technical way ahead is understood and being discussed at a very deliberate level in order to enable stability to be achieved in these nuclear plants, and eventually recovery to be the focus. So as – we watch these every day, radiation values have been decreasing, the effects of the plume, which is kind of the smokestack effect of these nuclear reactors, is something that we monitor very closely, and the radiation values in that have been diminishing. And we've actually been surveying with the Japanese the surface contamination in and around the Fukushima plants, and likewise, due to decay, those values have been lowering. So we're cautiously optimistic as we look forward, given the general improvement that we see day to day.

QUESTION: Hi, I'm Takeshi Yamashina for Mainichi Shimbun and thank you for – thank you very much for your helping for us in Japan. And --

ADM WILLARD: Our pleasure.

QUESTION: My question is of – just to follow up on his questions about the relationship between Japan and the U.S., though I heard that those – from the beginning stage, there is some difficulty between communications or relationship between Japan Government – Japanese Government and so – American Government. So for example, so there – I heard that – so Japanese Government couldn't – as you said before, so that – couldn't provide the – any information about the nuclear plants, and not only – mainly nuclear plants. So they're a member of the United States Government, so frustrated about the situation. I heard that.

So what – how do you manage to – or improving the situation through the – as you said before, now you're – we have a good relationship and a good communication. How do you manage or how do you – improving the situation? That is --

ADM WILLARD: Thanks. It's a great question. I credit Ambassador Roos, the U.S. Ambassador in Japan, for bringing the expertise by the nuclear experts in the United States, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, our Department of Energy and others together at the Embassy in Tokyo so that the exchange government to government, rather than being via video teleconference or telephone was person to person.

So I think much of the improvement occurred as U.S. experts went forward in order to both obtain information that they felt they were lacking and to exchange information and ideas that they thought might be helpful in this particular circumstance. And on the Japanese part, I think there was an increasing willingness to, in the midst of crisis – so they're very, very busy as ministries overseeing a major crisis for their country in Northern Honshu – I think there was an increasing willingness and ability to take time to conduct these exchanges with U.S. experts that were trying to help.

So again, this – in the midst of a confluence of disasters, three in – three at one time, the beginning of government to government discussions as the United States was attempting to assist Japan went through, I think, a very typical growth process, a evolution, where the exchange of information got increasingly good and began to achieve what it was – we were hoping to achieve over time. But I credit the Japanese Government. And when you consider how far they've come in just four weeks, I think they've done a very, very good job in handling this crisis.

QUESTION: Roger Batson with NTV, Nippon TV, once more. I just wanted to see if you could give a few more examples on the – how you're responding to the radiation challenges and your mission efforts. And also, on a related – opposite question is I believe there was an announcement last week that the U.S. Pacific Fleet may be turning over command from – or actually, it won't be running the operations. There will be forces that are currently stationed in Japan, and also, I believe they're going to be reducing the size of the number – the U.S. presence there providing assistance. I just wanted to confirm that or to get any more details if you could about that.

ADM WILLARD: Yeah, thanks. On the managing the radiation issues first, in terms of examples, there are – there are really – there – I would put it in three categories. One is assisting Japan in understanding the situation surrounding the plants, everything from thermal imaging to radiation monitoring is being contributed to by some of the capabilities the United States has able – has been able to bring to Japan. So together, with all of the ground monitoring, surface monitoring, air monitoring that's going on, both sides are endeavoring to build an understanding of exactly the situation that these plants are in, moment by moment, so that they can make the right decisions regarding how to go about technically correcting the problems that they're having and stabilizing the plants. So it's in that surveillance piece that I think we've been able to contribute.

In addition to that, there is a large-scale effort to support what the Japanese defense forces are doing directly in assisting Tepco and advancing the corrective actions around the plant. So where General Oriki, the chief of defense of Japan, requires U.S. assistance, whether it's in training, whether it's in direct assistance by radiological experts and exchange of information with his people, we are providing that as well. And then there's – there is a very broad issue where we're exchanging with the Japanese defense forces our respective standards and management of long-term exposure and issues like that. So there's a – there is an exchange ongoing realizing how unique this situation is between these two militaries and, frankly, within my own military, across our services, to understand how to properly manage ourselves in this environment, and in the long term, how to manage family members and others that are in this environment.

So to the extent that even low doses of radiation are involved, I think managing every – educating everyone and managing their understanding of what they're dealing with is a very important part of this.

QUESTION: And the scale back of U.S. forces?

ADM WILLARD: Yeah. To share this with you, there is – the commander that I placed in charge of the support to the Japanese defense force was a three-star general that, as you – my United States Forces Command commander. When the level – a level of uncertainty developed regarding the totality of the reactor's accident this became much more complex an environment, and the United States desired to increase the scope of the support that we would offer to the Japanese. I installed the U.S. Pacific fleet commander, a four-star admiral, in charge of the overall operation. He's been conducting now the operation in command for several weeks.

And we're at a point now to where Japanese Self-Defense Forces and civil authorities in the north can handle the desire to handle the humanitarian assistance and disaster response more than in the past. And we intend to refocus our forces to primarily support the consequence management operations for the reactor's accident. So that adjustment of forces is occurring. And at the same time, I'm comfortable reinstalling the United States Forces Command commander and putting him in command of the operation. So that – those adjustments have been made over the past several days.

MODERATOR: Okay. We have time for one more question.

QUESTION: Mark Lee from YTN. I have a question about North Korea. What do you see – I mean, it has been almost a year, a little more than a year since they sunk the *Cheonan* ship, and – how do you see we can ease the tension in the South – I mean the Korean Peninsula. And if there's – if you're preparing for anything after, post Kim Jong-il regime, that's my question if you are --

ADM WILLARD: Thanks. I think in terms of easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, many efforts are underway to do that. International efforts have been underway for some time. There has been on and off discussions regarding North-South talks, which would be intended to ease tensions between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK. But in the end, what will ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula will be a cessation of the provocative acts that have been ongoing for the past year by the North Koreans.

So as you suggest, a little over a year ago, the South Korean ship *Cheonan* was sunk by a North Korean torpedo. You'll recall that in December, we were contending with a crisis on the Korean Peninsula as a result of unprovoked artillery attacks on the northwest island of YP-do. The North Koreans are undergoing a succession period. Whether these provocations are linked to Kim Jong-un, the name – the likely successor, establishing his bona fides with the North Korean military or not, will remain to be seen.

But the provocative actions by the North Korean regime, by Kim Jong-il, his regime and elites, must stop. And I think that's the way to cease tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

If I may, before, I guess, we call out here, I would just offer that U.S. Pacific Command with this broad area of responsibility, 36 nations, 34 of which have militaries or security forces, is – has a principle responsibility to maintain security throughout this region of the world or to contribute to security alongside our allies and partners, all of whom are themselves helping to make the Asia Pacific a stable place for all of us to enjoy economic prosperity and the advancements of the individual nations and their populations in this fascinating region.

The priorities that Pacific Command has to manage this relationship with China to ultimately become a constructive partnership, to strengthen allies and partners and build a fabric of security and stability that benefits everyone in the Asia Pacific, to deal with extremist organizations like Lashkar-e Tayyiba, Abu Sayyaf group, and Jemaah Islamaya, and to better strengthen the relationships that we have in dealing with both the varying partners in the region, but also those in the region that require our focus and attention to improve their contribution to the overall security. These are things that I think you would want Pacific Command to do for you and for the region as a whole. The United States is there to stay.

We've mentioned, in various multilateral forums last year, the national interest that the United States has for the South China Sea region and for the commons across the Asia

Pacific. Space and cyberspace are becoming issues that our partners and allies in the region are increasingly concerned about and are – the security of these commons, discussing with themselves and discussing with the United States. So again, no loss of issues for the armed forces in the Asia Pacific.

At the same time, I'm optimistic that the peace and prosperity that this very, very complex and critical part of the world has enjoyed for the last six decades can continue as long as these nations opt to work together in providing the security that all the people of the Asia Pacific so well deserve.

Thanks for the opportunity to answer your questions today, and I look forward to the next time.

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